

Indian Act

a comment recently which was very impressive. It came to my attention that the school system on the Indian reservation at Brantford is one of the best in any township across the Dominion of Canada. It would put many townships to shame. In addition to that, the percentage of children attending secondary schools in Tuscarora township is higher than any surrounding township in the district. That is a matter which I think should be known. I understand that is the case although I have no definite proof that it is.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in relation to what is contained in this resolution I think it should have been done long ago. After listening to the hon. member for Brantford it was brought forcibly to mind that we have treated the Indians in this country in a disgraceful way, particularly when one considers what they have done for us. I think most people in Canada will agree with that. Whether or not this government is finally going to do more for the Indians still remains to be seen. Certainly nothing was done under the last revision of the Indian Act. We cannot speak about the measures coming forward in this act because we do not know what they will accomplish, but judging from some of the things we have heard I assume the minister himself is seeking more control.

As I said yesterday with regard to another bill, this disease seems to be highly infectious. One minister after another comes before parliament and asks for greater control and power in his own department, taking the power away from the governor in council and placing it in the hands of the minister himself. It is not a laughing matter, Mr. Chairman.

An hon. Member: The minister thinks so.

Mr. Charlton: I see the minister is laughing; he thinks it is a big joke, but for those who have to tolerate that sort of legislation I can assure him they do not appreciate it.

There has been a veil of secrecy concerning the number of meetings held with regard to the proposed changes in this act. I would like to ask the minister several questions at this time. At how many meetings were delegates from the Six Nations reservation in attendance? Did they know of all the meetings that were held? If not, why not? I understand there were two meetings held about which the Six Nations group did not know anything, and that, of course, did not increase their feeling of good will toward the government. Instead, it only increased their suspicion toward what is being done by this government.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. member like an answer to that question now?

Mr. Charlton: Yes, of course.

Mr. Pickersgill: There was only one meeting held. It was held with representatives of Indians from all over Canada in the month of December. That was the only meeting at which the proposed amendments to the act were discussed with the Indians.

Mr. Charlton: That is the only meeting at which these proposed changes were brought forward. Have there been any other meetings regarding the Indian Act or Indian administration?

Mr. Pickersgill: There are meetings all the time all over the country.

Mr. Charlton: Have the Six Nations Indians always been represented?

Mr. Pickersgill: Not at the ones in British Columbia.

Mr. Charlton: There are no Six Nations Indians in British Columbia.

Mr. Pickersgill: There has been only one national meeting.

Mr. Charlton: The Six Nations were or were not represented?

Mr. Pickersgill: They were represented and very ably represented.

Mr. Charlton: If they were represented I would say that they would be very ably represented. Did they agree to the changes in the act that are being brought forward?

Mr. Pickersgill: I think that is something about which the Indians should be allowed to speak for themselves, but I had the impression that they agreed. However, I do not like to speak for other people.

Mr. Charlton: That is not the story I got. We will let that go for the moment. The minister made a speech before the Canadian Club here in Ottawa on March 28, and in the last paragraph on page 4 he is reported to have said:

Under the present Indian Act it is possible for an Indian to retain his status as an Indian and to secure the vote in federal elections.

That is all the minister said about it. The minister did not go on to explain what they had to do, he just said that under this act it was possible. Yes, it is possible if they give up their rights to income tax exemption. That is the string attached to it. Surely we are not so small that we will not give the Indian, after hearing what the hon. member for Brantford had to say, a vote in federal elections. They have to pay all the taxes which other people pay except on land in the reservation and income tax on earnings made on the reservation. They pay every tax that anyone else pays, and yet